THE EARL of ESSEX. A TRAGEDY.

As it is Acted at the THEATRE-ROYAL IN COVENT-GARDEN.

WRITTEN BY Mr HENRY JONES.

LONDON.
Printed in the Year MDCCLXXIII.

BODLEIAN
P
20 AUG 1975
LIBRARY

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr BARRY.

OUR desp'rate Bard a bold Excursion tries,
Tho' Danger damp'd his Wing, he dar'd to rise:
From Hope, high rais'd, all glorious Actions spring;
'Tis hence that Heroes conquer, Poets sing.
Even he may feel the soul-exalting Fire,
Fame prompts the humblest Bosom to aspire.
Without a Guide this rash Attempt he made,
Without a Clue from Art, or Learning's Aid.
He takes a Theme where tend'rest Passions glow,
A Theme, your Grandsires felt with pleasing Woe.
Essex' sad Tale he strives to cloath anew,
And hopes to place it in a stronger View.
Poets, like Painters, may, by equal Law,
The lab'ur'd Piece from diff'rent Masters draw:
Perhaps improve the Plan, add Fire and Grace,
And strike th' impassion'd Soul through all the Face.
How far our Author has secur'd a Claim
To this exalted Palm, this wish'd-for Fame,
Your generous Sentiments will soon declare:
Humanity is ever prone to spare.
'Twere Baseness then your Candour to distrust;
A British Audience will, at least, be just.
A flattering Truth he fearful must confess,
His sanguine Friends made promise of success,
But that, he fears, their ardent Wishes wrought,
Since partial Favour seldom sees a Fault.
Then bear like patient Friends, this first Essay,
His next shall thank you in a nobler Way.

PERSONS.

MEN.

The Earl of Eſſex,	Mr Barry.
Earl of Southampton,	Mr Smith.
Lord Burleigh,	Mr Sparks.
Sir Walter Raleigh,	Mr Uſher.
Lieutenant of the Tower,	Mr Bransby.

WOMEN.

Queen Elizabeth,	Mrs Bland.
Counteſs of Rutland,	Mrs Cibber.
Counteſs of Nottingham,	Mrs Vincent.

Lords, Ladies, and Attendants.

THE EARL of ESSEX.

ACT I.

SCENE, *an Antichamber in the Palace.*

Enter BURLEIGH *and* RALEIGH.

Burleigh.

THE bill, at length, has paſs'd oppoſing numbers,
Whilſt crouds ſeditious clamour'd round the ſenate.
and headſtrong faction urg'd its force within.

Ral. It has, my Lord ---The wiſh'd for day is come,
When this proud idol of the people's hearts
Shall now no more be worſhip'd---Eſſex falls,
My lord, the minute's near that ſhall unravel
The myſtic ſchemes of this aſpiring man.
Now fortune, with officious hand, invites us
To her, and opens wide the gates of greatneſs,
The way to power. My heart exults; I ſee,
I ſee, my Lord, our outmoſt wiſh accompliſh'd!
I ſee great Cecil ſhine without a rival,
And England bleſs him as her guardian ſaint.
Such potent inſtruments I have prepar'd,
As ſhall, with ſpeed, o'erturn this hated man,
And daſh him down by proof invincible.

Burl. His day of glory now is ſet in night.
And all my anxious hopes, at laſt, are crown'd.
Thoſe proofs againſt him, Raleigh---

Ral. All arriv'd.

Burl. Arriv'd! how? when?

Ral. This very hour, my lord:
Nay, more, a perſon comes, of high diſtinction,
To prove ſome ſecret treaties made by Eſſex,
With Scotland's Monarch and the proud Tyrone.

Burl. How ſay'ſt? to prove 'em?

Ral. Ay, my lord, and back'd
With circumſtances of a ſtronger nature.
It now appears his ſecretary Cuff,
With Blunt, and Lee, were deep concern'd in this
Deſtructive ſcheme, contriv'd to raiſe this lord,
And ruin Cecil. O it is a ſubtil,
A deep laid miſchief, by the earl contriv'd,
In hour malignant, to o'erturn the ſtate,
And (horror to conceive!) dethrone the Queen.

Burl. These gladsome tidings fly beyond my hopes!
The Queen will listen now, will now believe,
And trust the counsel of her faithful Burleigh.
Let this most lucky circumstance be kept
A secret still from public observation.---
Dispose 'em well, till kind occasion call
Their office forth, lest prying craft mean while
May tamper with their thoughts, and change their minds:
Let them, like batteries conceal'd, appear
At once, both to surprise and to destroy.

Ral. This sudden shock, my lord, this weighty stroke
Must press him headlong down to deep destruction:
Indignant fate marks out this dreaded man,
And fortune now has left him.

Burl. Thank the changeling!
His servile faction soon will stand aghast,
And sink, at distance, from his threat'ning fall.

Ral. His headstrong friend, the bold Southampton, too
Now finds his rash endeavours all defeated;
And storms at thee and the impeaching commons.

Burl. Let him rave on, and rage.---The lion in
The toils entangled, wastes his strength, and roars
In vain; his efforts but amuse me now.-----

Ral. What triumphs in my soul shall reign, to see
This sanguine and o'erbearing man brought down
Beneath my envy; nay, below my scorn,
How young ambition swells my rising hopes!
'Tis Heaven, O Cecil, calls, thro' England's voice;
And justice, bending from above, invites us.

Enter Gentleman.

Gent. My lord, the lady Nottingham desires
With much impatience to attend your lordship.

Burl. What may the purport of her business be!
Her tender wishes are to Essex ty'd
In love's soft fetters, and endearing bonds;
For him, each melting thought awakes desire,
And all her soul is lavish'd on that lord.---
This unexpected visit much surprizes me!
What can it mean? She would not come to pry,
And pick out tales for Essex' ear!---Why, let her:
I'm arm'd secure against her arts and cunning;
Besides, her errand comes too late; for now
Her minion's doom'd to fall---Conduct her in:

[*Exit* Gentleman.

And you, my Raleigh, watch Southampton's steps;
With care observe each movement of his friends;

Let no advantage on that side be loſt. [*Exit* Ral.
Southampton's Eſſex' ſecond ſelf; he ſhares
His headlong councils, and adopts his ſchemes;
His daring heart, and bold ungovern'd tongue,
Are both enliſted in the rath deſigns
Of this proud lord, nor knows a will but his;
A limb, ſo fix'd, muſt with the body fall.

Enter Lady Nottingham.

Not. Thrice hail to reſcu'd England's guiding genius!
His country's guardian, and his Queen's defence!
Great Burleigh, thou! whoſe patriot boſom beats
With Albion's glory, and Eliza's fame;
Who ſhield's her perſon, and ſupport's her throne.
For thee, what fervent thanks, what offer'd vows,
Do proſtrate millions pay!
Earl. Bright excellence!
This fair applauſe too highly over-rates,
Too much extols, the low deſerts of Cecil.
Not. What praiſes are too high for patriot-worth;
Or what applauſe exceeds the price of virtue?
My lord, conviction has at laſt ſubdu'd me,
And I am honour's proſ'lyte;---too long
My erring heart purſu'd the ways of faction;
I own myſelf t'have been your bitt'reſt foe,
And join'd with Eſſex in each ſoul attempt
To blaſt your honour, and traduce your fame.
Earl. Tho' ne'er my wiſhing heart could call you friend,
Yet honour and eſteem I always bore you;
And never meant, but with reſpect to ſerve you;
It grieves me, madam, to have thus offended,
Where moſt my wiſhes labour'd to oblige.
Not. I know your honour and your virtues well;
Your public plans, deſign'd for England's good,
And all your private merit's weigh'd.---But, oh,
How blind is reaſon in the maze of paſſion!
I ſought your ruin, labour'd for your fall:
But if repentence may attone for guilt,
Or ſelf-reproach for ſharpeſt penance paſs:
No mortal breaſt e'er felt more woe than mine,
And Burleigh now may rank me for his friend.
Earl. That ſuch a worth of ſoul ſhould be abus'd!
Could I accuſe my heart but of a thought
To do you wrong? If any purpoſe ever
Againſt your welfare in my ſoul aroſe
That look'd with malice on your ſhining merit,
Your matchleſs beauty, or your brighter virtues;

Then let me live despis'd, a proverb made
To every passing slave: nay, more, the scorn
And trampl'd footstool of the man I hate.
Not. It is enough, my lord, I know it well,
And feel rekindling virtue warm my breast;
Honour and gratitude their force resume
Within my heart, and every wish is your's!
O Cecil, Cecil, what a foe hast thou,
A deadly foe, whilst hated Essex lives!
Burl. I know it well, but can assign no cause.
Not. Ambition's restless hand has wound his thought
Too high for England's welfare; nay, the Queen
Scarce sits in safety on her throne, while he
Th' audacious Essex, freely treads at large,
And breathes the common air. Ambition is
The only God he serves, to whom he'd sacrifice
His honour, country, friends, and every tie
Of truth, and bond of nature; nay, his love.
Burl. I find this bus'ness works as I would have it.
[*Aside.*
The man that in his public duty fails,
On private virtues will disdainful tread,
As steps to raise him to some higher purpose;
In vain each softer wish would plead with him,
No tender movement in his soul prevails,
And mighty love, who rules all nature else,
Must follow here in proud ambition's train.
Not. Pronounce it not, my soul abhors the sound,
Like death.---- O Cecil, will you kindly lend
Some pity to a wretch like me?
Burl. Command,
Madam, my power and will are yours. ~~I feel~~
Your wrongs, I feel the base returns you've met
From this ungrateful and disloyal man,
Tho' oft your goodness screen'd him from reproof;
Believe me worthy to partake your grievance,
Accept my service, and employ my power.
Not. Will Cecil's friendly ear vouchsafe to bend
Its great attention to a woman's wrongs,
Whose pride and shame, resentment and despair,
Rise up in raging anarchy at once,
To tear with ceaseless pangs my tortur'd soul?
Words are unequal to the woes I feel,
And language lessens what my heart endures;
Passion repuls'd with scorn, and proud disdain,
Recoils indignant on my shrinking soul,
Beats back my vital springs, and crushes life.
Earl. Madam, your wrongs, I must confess, are great;

Yet ſtill, I fear, you know not half his falſhood.
Who, that had eyes to look on beauty? Who,
That had a heart to feel that beauty's power?
Who, but the falſe, perfideous Eſſex cou'd
Preſer to Nottingham a Rutland's charms?
Start not.----By heav'n, I tell you nought but truth,
What I can prove, paſt doubt; that he receiv'd
The lady Rutland's hand, in ſacred wedlock,
The very night before his ſetting out
For Ireland.

Not. O may quick deſtruction ſeize 'em!
May furies blaſt, and hell deſtroy their peace!
May all their nights---

Burl. I pray have patience, madam,
Reſtrain a-while your rage; curſes are vain.
But there's a ſurer method to deſtroy him;
And, if you'll join with me, 'tis done, he falls

Not. Ha! ſay'ſt thou, Burleigh! ſpeak, my genius ſpeak;
Be quick, as vengeance 'ſelf, to tell me how.

Burl. You muſt have heard, the Commons have impeach'd him,
And we have proofs ſufficient for his ruin.
But then, the Queen---you know, how fair he ſtands
In her eſteem; and Rutland too, his wife,
Has full poſſeſſion of the royal ear.
What then avail impeachments, or the law's
Severeſt condemnation, while the Queen
May ſnatch him from th' uplifted hand of juſtice?
Here then, my Nottingham, begins thy taſk,
Try ev'ry art, incenſe the Queen againſt him,
Then ſtep between her and the lady Rutland;
Let not her fondneſs find the leaſt acceſs
To the Queen's heart, to counterwork our purpoſe.
Obſerve Southampton too, with jealous eye;
Prevent, as much as poſſible, his ſuit,
For, well I know, he will not fail to try
His eloquence on the behalf of Eſſex.

Not. It ſhall be done; his doom is fix'd; he dies!
O! 'twas a precious thought! I never knew
Such heart felt ſatisfaction!---Eſſex dies!
And Rutland, in her turn, ſhall learn to weep.
The time is precious; I'll about it ſtreight.
Come, vengeance, come, aſſiſt me now to breath,
Thy venom'd ſpirit in the royal ear. [*Exit* Not.

Burl. There ſpoke the very genius of the ſex.
A diſappointed woman ſets no bounds
To her revenge. Her temper's form'd to ſerve me.

Enter Raleigh.

Ral. The lord Southampton, with ungovern'd rage,

Reſents, aloud, his diſappointed meaſures:
I met him in the outward court; he ſeeks.
In haſte, your lordſhip, and, forgetting forms,
Purſues me hither, and demands to ſee you.
Burl. Raleigh, 'tis well---- Withdraw ---- Attend the Queen;
Leave me to deal with this o'erbearing man. [*Exit* Ral.

Enter Southampton.

South. Where is the man, whom virtue calls her friend?
I give you joy, my lord!-- Your quencheleſs fury,
At length, prevails,---and now your malice triumphs:
You've hunted honour to the toils of faction,
And view his ſtruggles with malicious joy.
Burl. What means my lord?
South. O fraud! ſhall valiant Eſſex
Be made a ſacrifice to your ambition?
Oh, it ſmells rank, indeed, of foulelt malice,
And the vile ſtateſman's craft.--You dare not, ſure,
Thus bid defiance to each ſhew of worth,
Each claim of honour; dare not injure thus
Your ſuff'ring country in her braveſt ſon?
Burl. But, why ſhould ſtern reproach her angry brow
Let fall on me? Am I, alone, the cauſe,
That gives this working humour ſtrength? Do I
Inſtruct the public voice to warp his actions?
Juſtice, unaught, ſhall poize th' impartial ſcales,
And every curious eye may mark the beam.
South. The ſpecious ſhield [illegible]ich private malice bears,
Is ever blazon'd with ſome public good;
Behind that artful fence ſculk, low conceal'd,
The bloody purpoſe, and the poiſon'd ſhaft;
Ambition, there, and envy, neſtle cloſe;
From thence they take their fatal aim unſeen;
And honeſt merit is the deſtin'd mark.
Burl. Your warm diſtemper'd zeal puts raſhly by
The cool, directing hand of wholeſom reaſon.
No imputation foul ſhall reſt on me;
My honeſt purpoſes defy aloud
The ſlander-ſpreading tongue of buſy faction,
To caſt its venom on my fair report,
Or tell poſterity, Thus Cecil did.
My country's welfare, and my Queen's commands,
Have ever been my guiding ſtars through life,
My ſure directions ſtill;---to theſe I now
Appeal;---from theſe no doubt this lord's miſconduct
Hath widely ſtray'd, and reaſon, not reviling,

Muſt now befriend his cauſe.

South. How ill had providence
Diſpos'd the ſuff'ring world's oppreſt affairs;
Had ſacred right's eternal rule been left
To crafty politicians' partial ſway?
Then power and pride wou'd ſtretch th' enormous graſp,
And call their arbitrary portion, juſtice:
Ambition's arm, by av'rice urg'd, wou'd pluck
The core of honeſty from virtue's heart,
And plant deceit, and rancour in its ſtead;
Falſhood wou'd trample then on truth and honour:
And envy poiſon ſweet benevolence.
Oh, 'tis a goodly groupe of attributes,
And well befits ſome ſtateſmen's righteous rule!
Out, out upon ſuch baſe and bloody doings!
The term of being is not worth the ſin;
No human boſom can endure its dart.
Then put this cruel purpoſe from thee far,
Nor let the blood of Eſſex whelm thy ſoul.

Burl. 'Tis well, my lord! your words no comment need,
No doubt, they've well explain'd your honeſt meaning,
'Tis clear and full.--To parts, like yours, diſcretion
Wou'd be a clog, and caution but incumbrance.
Yet, mark me well, my lord! the clinging ivy
With th' oak may riſe, but with it too muſt fall.

South. Thy empty threats, ambitious man, hurt not
The breaſt of truth: fair innocence and faith,
Thoſe ſtrangers to thy practis'd heart, ſhall ſhield
My honour, and preſerve my friend -----In vain,
Thy malice, with unequal arm, ſhall ſtrive
To tear th' applauded wreath from Eſſex' brow;
His honeſt laurel, held aloft by fame,
Above thy blaſting reach, ſhall ſafely flouriſh,
And bloom immortal to the lateſt times:
Whilſt thou, amidſt thy tangling ſnares involv'd,
Shalt ſink confounded, and unpitied fall.

Burl. Rail on, proud lord, and give thy choler vent;
It waſtes itſelf in vain: the Queen ſhall judge
Between us in this warm debate. To her
I now repair, and, in her royal preſence,
You may approve your innocence and faith.
Perhaps, you'll meet me there.--Till then, farewel. [*Exit.*

South. Confuſion wait thy ſteps, thou cruel monſter:
My noble and illuſtrious friend's betray'd,
By crafty faction, and tyrannic power!
His ſinking trophies, and his falling fame,
Oppreſs my very ſoul. I'll to the Queen,
Lay all their envy open to her view,
Confront their malice, and preſerve my friend [*Exit.*

The Queen discovered, sitting on her throne.

Raleigh, *Lords, and Attendants.*

Queen. Without consulting me! presumptuous man!
Who governs here!---what! am not I your Queen?
You durst not, were he present, take this step.
Ral. Dread sovereign, your ever faithful commons
Have, in their gratitude, and love for you,
Preferr'd this salutary bill against him.

Enter Burleigh.

Queen. You, my lord Burleigh, must have known of this.
The commons here impeach the earl of Essex
Of practising against the state and me.
Methinks, I might be trusted with the secret.
Speak, for I know it well, 'twas thy contrivance.
Ha! was it not? you dare not say it was not.
Burl. I own my judgment did concur with theirs.
His crimes, I fear, will justify the charge,
And vindicate their loyalty and mine.
Queen. Ha! tell not me your smooth, deceitful story,
I know your projects, and your close cabals,
You'd turn my favour into party feuds,
And use my sceptre as the rod of faction:
But Henry's daughter claims a nobler soul,
I'll nurse no party, but will reign o'er all,
And my sole rule shall be to bless my people:
Who serves them best has still my highest favour;
This Essex ever did.

Enter Southampton.

Behold, *Southampton.*
What a base portrait's here! The faithful Essex,
Here drawn at large, associating with rebels,
To spoil his country, and dethrone his Queen,
South. It is not like,---By heaven, the hand of envy
Drew these false lines, distorted far from truth,
And honour, and unlike my noble friend,
As light to shade, or hell to highest heav'n.
Then suffer not, thou best of Queens, this lord,
This valiant lord, to fall a sacrifice
To treachery, and base designs; who now
Engages death in all his horrid shapes,
Amidst a hardy race inur'd to danger:
But let him, face to face, this charge encounter;
And every falsehood, like his foes, shall fly.
Queen. To me, you seem, to recommend strict justice

Act

In all her pomp of power. But are you ſure,
No ſubtil vice, conceal'd, aſſumes her garb?
Take heed, that malice does not wear the maſk,
Nor envy deck her in the borrow'd guiſe;
Rancour has often darken'd reaſon's eye,
And judgment winks, when paſſion holds the ſcale
Impeach the very man, to whom I owe
My brighteſt rays of glory!---Look to it, lords!
Take care, be cautious on what ground you tread;
Let honeſt means alone ſecure your footing.
Raleigh and you withdraw, and wait our leiſure.

[*Exeunt* Ral. *and* South.

Lord Burleigh, ſtay; we muſt, with you, have farther
Conf'rence.--I ſee this baſe contrivance plain;
Your jealouſy and pride, your envy of
His ſhining merit, brought this bill to light:
But mark me, as you prize our high regard,
And favour, I command you to ſuppreſs it:
Let not our name and power be embarraſs'd
In your perplexing ſchemes; 'twas you began,
And therefore you muſt end it.

Burl. I obey.
Yet humbly would intreat you to conſider
How new, unpopular, this ſtep muſt be,
To ſtand between your parliament's enquiry
And this offending lord---We have ſuch proofs---

Queen. Reſerve your proofs to a more proper ſeaſon,
And let them then appear. But once again
We charge you on your duty and allegiance
To ſtop this vile proceeding, and to wait
'Till Eſſex can defend himſelf in perſon.
If then your accuſations are of force,
The laws, and my conſent, no doubt are open
He has my ſtrict command, with menace mix'd,
To end effectually this hated war,
Ere he preſume to quite the Iriſh coaſt.

Burl. Madam, my duty now compels me to---

Queen. No more! ſee that my orders be obey'd.

[*Exit* Burl.

Eſſex, a traitor!---it can never be---
His grateful and his honeſt ſoul diſdains it.---
I know him hot, ambitious, raſh, impatient;
But then, he's firmly anchor'd in his duty;
Tho' ſtormy paſſions toſs him to and fro.
Can he prove falſe? ſo high advanc'd, ſo honour'd,
So near my favour---and---I fear, ſo near
My heart?---Impoſſible.---This Burleigh hates him:
And, as his rival, therefore would deſtroy him:

But he ſhall find his narrow ſchemes defeated.
In vain their fraudful efforts ſhall combine,
To ſhake my ſettled ſoul, my firm deſign,
Reſolvd to lift bright virtues palm on high,
Support her grandeur, and her foes defy. [*Exit.*

Ring

ACT II.

Enter Burleigh *and* Raleigh.

Burleigh.

ESSEX arriv'd? confuſion to my hopes!
His preſence will deſtroy me with the Queen.
I muſt ſuſpect he had ſome private notice,
Perhaps, a punctual order, to return.
He lurks too near her heart---What's to be done?
Prepare the witneſſes with ſpeed; apprize
The lady Nottingham.-----Southampton's pride,
And Rutland's too, will lift the creſt again.
But fly, my Raleigh, ſend me Nottingham. [*Exit* Ral.
We muſt alarm the Queen with new commotions,
In many parts of her dominions rais'd:
All this, and more, muſt now be paſs'd for truth.
This ſudden blow hath ſtruck me to the ſoul;
'Tis gone too far, he dies---proud Eſſex now,
Or Cecil falls. Now is th' important criſis----
Keep up thy uſual ſtrength; my better genius,
Direct my ſteps to cruſh my mortal foe.

Flourish. *Enter* Queen *and* Raleigh. Attends

Queen. It cannot be! Return'd without my leave!
Againſt my ſtrict command! --Impoſſible!
Ral. Madam, the earl is now at court, and begs
An audience of your majeſty.
Queen. Amazing!
What! break his truſt! deſert his high command!
Forſake his poſt, and diſobey his Queen!
'Tis falſe---invented all.--- You wiſh it ſo.
Burl. Madam, I wiſh ſome other rumours falſe;
Reports, I fear, of great concern to you.
Queen. What rumours, what reports? Your frown wou'd much
Denote; your preface ſeems important---Speak.
Burl. Some new commotions are of late ſprung up
In Ireland, where the Weſt is all in arms;
And moves with haſty march to join Tyrone,

And all his northern clans. A dreadful power?
Nay, more, we have advices from the borders,
Of ſudden riſings, near the banks of Tweed!
'Tis thought, to favour an attempt from Scotland.
Mean while, Tyrone embarks ſix thouſand men
To land at Milford, and to march where Eſſex
Shall join them with his friends.

Queen. In league with James!
And plotting with Tyrone! It cannot be.
His very pride diſdains ſuch perfidy.
But is not Eſſex here without my leave!
Againſt my ſtrict command! that, that's rebellion.
The reſt, if true, or falſe, it matters not.
What's to be done?---Admit him to my preſence:
No, no,--- my dignity, my pride, forbid it.
Ungrateful man, approach me not; riſe, rile
Reſentment, and ſupport my ſoul! Diſdain,
Do thou aſſiſt me---Yes, it ſhall be ſo.

Burl. I ſee ſhe muſes deep; ~~her mind works upwards,~~
~~And paints its ſtruggling efforts in her face.~~
Tyrone's invaſion wakes her fear and anger,
And all her ſoul is one continued ſtorm.

Queen. For once my pride ſhall ſtoop; and I will ſee
This raſh, audacious, this once favour'd man;
But treat him as his daring crimes deſerve.

Enter Southampton.

South. Permit me, madam, to approach you thus;
[*kneels.*
Thus, lowly, to preſent the humble ſuit
Of the much injur'd, faithful Earl of Eſſex:
Who dares not, unpermitted, meet your preſence.
He begs, moſt gracious Queen, to fall before
Your royal feet, to clear him to his ſovereign,
Whom, next to heaven, he wiſhes moſt to pleaſe.
Let faction load him with her lab'ring hand,
His innocence ſhall riſe againſt the weight,
If but his gracious miſtreſs deign to ſmile.

Queen. Let him appear. [*Exit* South.
Now to thy trying taſk,
My ſoul! put forth, exert thy utmoſt ſtrength,
Now let an injur'd Queen be tame---Ly ſtill,
My heart! I cannot liſten to thee now.

Enter Eſſex *and* Southampton.

Eſſ. Forgive, thou injur'd Majeſty! thou beſt
Of Queens! this ſeeming diſobedience. See,
I bend ſubmiſſive in your royal preſence,

With ſoul as penitent; as if before
Th' all-ſearching eye of heav'n. But, oh, that frown!
My Queens reſentment wounds my inmoſt ſpirit,
Strikes me like death, and pierces thro' my heart.

Queen. You have obey'd, my lord! you've ſerv'd me well!
My deadly foes are quell'd! and you come home
A conqueror! your country bids you welcome!
And I, your Queen, applaud! ---Triumphant man!
What! is it thus that Eſſex gains his laurels?
And is it thus you've born my high commiſſion?
How durſt you diſregard your truſted duty,
Deſert your province, and betray your Queen?

Eſſ. I came to clear my injur'd name from guilt,
Imputed guilt, and ſtand'rous accuſations.
My ſhame was wafted in each paſſing gale,
Each ſwelling tide came loaded with my wrongs;
And Eccho ſounded forth from faction's voice;
The Traytor Eſſex.---Was't not hard, my Queen,
That whilſt I ſtood in danger's dreadful front,
Encount'ring death in ev'ry ſhape of terror,
And bleeding for my country!---Was't not hard,
My mortal enemies at home, like cowards,
Shou'd in my abſence baſely blaſt my fame!

Queen. It is the godlike attribute of kings,
To raiſe the virtuous, and protect the brave.
I was the guardian of your reputation:
What malice, or what faction then cou'd reach you?
My honour was expos'd engag'd for yours:
But you found reaſon to diſlike my care,
And to yourſelf aſſum'd the wreſted office.

Eſſ. If aught diſloyal in this boſom dwells,
If aught of treaſon lodges in this heart,
May I to guilt and laſting ſhame be wedded,
The ſport of faction, and the mark of ſcorn?
The world's deriſion, and my Queen's abhorrence.
Stand forth the villain, whoſe invenom'd tongue
Would taint my honour, and traduce my name,
Or ſtamp my conduct with a rebel's brand!
Lives there a monſter in the haunts of men,
Dares tear my trophies from their pillar'd baſe,
Eclipſe my glory, and diſgrace my deeds?

Queen. This ardent language, and this glow of ſoul,
were nobly graceful in a better cauſe;
Where virtue warrants, and where truth inſpires.
But injur'd truth, with brow invincible
Frowns ſtern reproof upon the falſe aſſertion,
And contradicts it with the force of facts.
From me you have appeal'd, ungrateful man;

The laws, not I, must listen to your plea.
Go, stand the test severe, abide the trial,
And mourn too late, the bounty you abus'd.

Exit Queen, Southampton, &c.

Ess. Is this the just requital, then, of all
My patriot-toils, and oft-encounter'd perils,
Amidst th' inclemencies of camps and climes?
Then be it so---unmov'd and dauntless, let me
This shock of adverse fortune firmly stand.
But yet methinks, 'tis somewhat sudden too.
My greatness, now deprived of each support,
Which bore so long it's envy'd weight aloft,
Must quick to ruin fall, and crush my hopes.

Enter Southampton.

South. Alas? my lord, the Queen's displeasure kindles
With warmth increasing, whilst lord Burleigh labours
T' inflame her wrath, and make it still burn fiercer.

Ess. I scorn the blaze of courts, the pomp of kings;
I give them to the winds and lighter vanity:
Too long they've rob'd me of substantial bliss,
Of solid happiness, and true enjoyment.
But, lead me to my mourning love; alas!
She sinks beneath oppressing ills, she fades,
She dies for my afflicting pangs, and seeks
Me, sorrowing in the walks of woe---Distraction!
O lead me to her, to my soul's desire.

South. Let caution guide you in this dang'rous step.
Consider well, my lord, the consequence----.
For should the Queen (forbid it heaven!) discover
Your private loves, your plighted hands, no power
On earth could step between you and destruction.
Lock up this secret from the prying world.

Enter Burleigh.

Burl. My lord of Essex, 'tis the Queen's command
That you forthwith resign your staff of office;
And further, she confines you to your palace.

Ess. Welcome, my fate; let fortune do her utmost;
I know the worst, and will confront her malice,
And bravely bear the unexpected blow.

Burl. The Queen, my lord, demands your quick compliance.

Ess. Go then, thou gladsome messenger of ill,
And, joyfully, feast thy fierce rapacious soul
With Essex' sudden and accomplish'd fall.
The trampled coarse, of all his envy'd greatness,
Lies prostrate now beneath thy savage feet;

But ſtill th' exalted ſpirit mounts above thee.
Go, tell the Queen thy own deteſted ſtory;
Full in her ſight diſcloſe the ſnaky labyrinths,
And lurking ſnares, you plant in virtue's path,
To catch integrity's unguarded ſtep.
Burl. How ill repaid are public toils and cares,
Where active honeſty with ſtation join'd,
Incurs but calumny, and foul reproach!
Your country has impeach'd, your Queen accus'd you;
To theſe addreſs your beſt defence, and clear
Your queſtion'd conduct from diſloyal guilt.
What anſwer to the Queen ſhall I return?
Eſſ. My ſtaff of office I from her receiv'd,
And will to her, and her alone, reſign it.
Burl. This bold refuſal will incenſe the Queen:
This arrogance will make your guilt the ſtronger. [*Exit.*
South. Suſtain, my noble friend, thy wonted greatneſs;
Collect thy fortitude, and ſummon all
Thy ſoul, to bear with ſtrength this cruſhing weight,
Which falls ſevere upon thee; whilſt my friendſhip
Shall lend a helping hand, and ſhare the burthen.
I'll hence with ſpeed, and to the Queen repair,
And all the power of warmeſt words employ,
To gain you yet one audience more, and bring
Her majeſty to milder thoughts. Farewel. [*Exit.*
Eſſ. As newly wak'd from all my dreams of glory,
Thoſe gilded viſions of deceitful joy,
I ſtand confounded at th' unlook'd-for change,
And ſcarcely feel this thunder-bolt of fate.
The painted clouds, which bore my hopes aloft,
Alas, are vaniſh'd now to yielding air,
And I am fall'n, indeed!----
How weak is reaſon, when affection pleads?
How hard to turn the fond, deluded heart,
From flatt'ring toys, which ſooth'd its vanity?
The laurel'd trophy, and the loud applauſe,
The victor's triumph, and the people's gaze,
The high hung banner, and recording gold,
Subdue me ſtill, ſtill cling around my heart,
And pull my reaſon down.

Enter Rutland.

Rutl. O let me fly
To claſp, embrace, the lord of my deſires!
My ſoul's delight, my utmoſt joy, my huſband!
I feel once more his painting boſom beat,
Once more I hold him in my eager arms,
Behold his face, and loſe my ſoul in rapture.

Eſſ. Tranſporting bliſs! my richeſt, deareſt treaſure!
My mourning turtle! my long abſent peace!
O come yet nearer, nearer to my heart!
My raptur'd ſoul ſprings forward to receive thee:
Thou heav'n on earth, thou balm of all my woe!
Rutl. O ſhall I credit then each raviſh'd ſenſe?
Has pitying heav'n conſented to my prayer?
It has, it has, my Eſſex is return'd!
But language poorly ſpeaks the joys I feel?
Let paſſion paint, and looks expreſs my ſoul.
Eſſ. With thee, my ſweeteſt comfort, I'll retire
From ſplended palaces, and glittering throngs,
To live emboſom'd in the ſhades of joy;
Where ſweet content extends her friendly arms,
And gives increaſing love a laſting welcome.
With thee I'll timely fly from proud oppreſſion,
Forget our ſorrows, and be bleſt for ever.
Rutl. O let us hence, beyond the reach of power;
Where fortune's hand ſhall never part us more.
In this calm ſtate of innocence and joy,
I'll preſs thee to my throbbing boſom cloſe.
Ambition's voice ſhall call in vain; the world,
The thankleſs world, ſhall never claim thee more,
And all thy buſineſs ſhall be love and Rutland.
Eſſ. The queen, incens'd at my return, abandons me
To Cecil's malice, and the rage of faction.
I'm now no more, the fav'rite child of fortune:
My enemies have caught me in the toils,
And life hath nothing worth my wiſh but thee.
Rutl. Deluſive dream of fancy'd happineſs!
And has my fatal fondneſs then deſtroy'd thee?
Oh! have I lur'd thee to the deadly ſnare,
Thy cruel foes have laid? Oh! have I put
Thy life in peril? My officious fears
Would needs inform thee of their wicked ſchemes.
I dreaded Cecil's malice, and my heart,
Longing to ſee thee, with impatience, liſtened
To its own alarms; and prudence ſunk beneath
The force of love.
Eſſ. Forbear my only comfort;
O tell me not of danger, death, and Burleigh,
Let every ſtar ſhed down its mortal bane
On my unſhelter'd head: Whilſt thus I fold
Thee in my raptur'd arms; I'll brave 'em all,
Defy my fate, and meet its outmoſt rigour.
Rutl. Alas! my lord, conſider where we are
Oh! 'tis the Queen's apartment; death is here:
I came to thee through peril's ambuſh'd path,

And every danger riſqu'd for thy embrace,
Each precious moment is by fate beſet,
And time ſtands trembling whilſt we thus confer!

Eſſ. Then let us hence from this deteſted place;
My reſcu'd ſoul diſdains the houſe of greatneſs,
Where humble honeſty can find no ſhelter.
From hence we'll fly, where love and virtue call,
Where happineſs invites---that wiſh of all;
With ſweet content, enjoy each bliſsful hour,
Beyond the ſmiles of fraud, or frowns of power.

ACT III.

Enter Burleigh *and* Nottingham.

Nottingham.

MY lord, I've ſought you out with much impatience.
You've had an audience of the Queen; what follow'd?

Burl. Soon as I told her Eſſex had refus'd
To yield his dignities, and ſtaff of office,
Againſt her high command, pronounc'd by me,
She ſeem'd depriv'd of reaſon for a moment;
Her working mind betray'd contending paſſions,
Which in her alter'd face appear'd by turns.
She paus'd like thunder in ſome kindling cloud.
Then inſtant burſt, with dreadful fury, forth:----
"And has the ungrateful wretch defy'd my mandate?
The proud, audacious traytor ſcorn'd my power?
He dares not, ſure---He dies!---the villain dies!"
Then, ſudden, ſoften'd into milder ſounds,
And call'd him, raſh, unhappy, gallant Eſſex!
On me her fury fell:---"my crafty plans
Againſt his reputation, fame, and life,
Had driv'n to extremes --- my malice did it,
My envy was his bane;" with all that paſſion
Or fury could ſuggeſt.---I begg'd to know
Her royal will concerning Eſſex, urg'd
Again his inſolence.---Amaz'd, a while
She ſtood, and wiſt not what to do.---At length
Collecting all her mind, theſe words ſhe utter'd ----
"Let him to th' tower"---I inſtantly withdrew,
But ſoon was countermanded, and deſired
To bring the Earl of Eſſex to her preſence.
I like it not, much I fear, ſhe'll ſtand
Between this high offender and the laws.

Not. Is Eſſex then ſecur'd?

Burl. Madam, he is;
And now comes guarded to the court.

Enter Gentleman.

Gent. Madam, the Queen
Is in her closet, and desires to see you. [*Exit.*
Not. I attend her.
Burl. She wants, no doubt, to be advis'd by you.
Improve this fair occasion, urge it home,
She must be quicken'd by repeated strokes
Of fresh indignities, by Essex offer'd,
To her royal person, and prerogative.
Be circumspect and cautious! mark her well.
Not. I know her foible. Essex long has had
An int'rest in her heart, which nothing can
O'erturn, except his own ungovern'd spirit.
It is, indeed, the instrument by which
We work, and cannot fail, if rightly us'd.
Burl. Madam, the Queen expects you instantly.
I must withdraw, and wait the earl's arrival. [*Exeunt.*

Queen discovered.

Queen Ill-fa'ed, wretched man! perverse and obstinate!
He counterworks my grace, and courts destruction.
He gives his deadly foes the dagger to
Destroy him, and defeats my friendly purpose,
Which would, by seeming to abandon, save him.
Nor will he keep the mask of prudence on
A moment's space.---What! must I bear this scorn?
No. Let me all the monarch reassume!
Exert my power, and be myself again!
O ill performing, disobedient heart! ----
Why shrink'st thou, fearful, from thy own resolve?

Enter Nottingham.

Thou com'st in time, I'm much disturb'd, abus'd,
My Nottingham, and would complain to thee,
Of insolence, neglect, and high contempt.
Essex presum'd to dictate laws within
My palace gates. How say'st thou Nottingham?
Not. Surely, my gracious Queen, it cannot be!
His heat and passion never could impel him
To take so bold a step, to such rash guilt:
Methinks, his very honour should prevent it.
Queen. Thy open, honest mind untutor'd seems,
In life's ungrateful and degen'rate school;
Where stubborn vice in every form appears,
Mocking correction's ineffectual rod.

~~It is indeed an evil hard to bear.~~
This haughty man has wanton'd with my grace,
Abus'd my bounty, and despis'd my favours.
That giving goodness should profusely flow
T'enrich the surly glebe, where only thorns
And noxious weeds will spring!
Resentment, then, shall in her turn prevail;
To angry laws I'll give this victim up.

Not. His conduct has, I fear, been too unguarded;
His hasty temper knows not where to stop.
Ambition is the spur of all his actions,
Which often drives him o'er his duty's limit.
At least, his enemies would have it so---
But malice, madam, seldom judges right.

Queen. O Nottingham, his pride is past enduring;
This insolent, audacious man forgets
His honour and allegiance.---And refus'd
To render up his staff of office here,
Beneath my very eye.

Not. Presumptuous man!
Your faithful subjects will resent this pride,
This insolence, this treason, to their Queen;
They must, my gracious sovereign,---'Tis not safe
To shield him longer from their just resentment;
Then give him up to justice and the laws.

Queen. You seem well pleas'd to urge severity.---
Offended majesty but seldom wants
Such sharp advisers.----Yet, no attribute
So well befits th' exalted seat supreme,
And pow'r's disposing hand, as clemency.
Each crime must from its quality be judg'd;
And pity there shou'd interpose, where malice
Is not the aggressor! Hence, I'll hear no more.

Not. Madam, my sentiments were well intended;
Justice, not malice, mov'd my honest zeal.
My words were echoes of the public voice,
Which daily rises, with repeated cries
Of high complaint, against this haughty lord.
I pity, from my heart, his rash attempts,
And much esteem the man.

Queen. Go, Nottingham,
My mind's disturb'd, and send me Rutland hither.

[*Exit Not.*

O vain distinction of exalted state!
No rank ascends above the reach of care,
Nor dignity can shield a Queen from woe.
Despotic nature's stronger sceptre rules,
And pain and passion in her right prevail.

O, the unpity'd lot, ſevere condition,
Of ſolitary, ſad, dejected grandeur!
Alone, condemn'd to bear th' unſocial throb
Of heart-felt anguiſh, and corroding grief;
Depriv'd of what, within this homely ſhed,
The pooreſt peaſant in affliction finds,
The kind, condoling comfort of a dear
Partaking friend---

Enter Counteſs of Rutland.

Rutland, I want thy timely
Counſel. I'm importun'd, and urg'd to puniſh---
But juſtice ſometimes has a cruel ſound,
Where mercy may with prudence meet, and both
Agree to ſoften rigour.--- Eſſex has,
No doubt provok'd my anger, and the laws,
His haughty conduct calls for ſharp reproof,
And juſt correction. Yet, I think him guiltleſs
Of ſtudied treaſons, or deſign'd rebellion.
Then tell me, Rutland, what the world reports,
What cenſure ſays of his unruly deeds.

Rutl. The world with envy's eye beholds his merit.
Madam, 'tis malice all, and falſe report.
I know his noble heart, 'tis fill'd with honour.
No trait'rous taint has touch'd his generous ſoul;
His grateful mind ſtill glows with pure affection;
And all his thoughts are loyalty and you.

Queen. I grant you, Rutland, all you ſay, and think
The earl poſſeſs'd of many ſplendid virtues.
What pity 'tis, he ſhould afford his foes
Such frequent, ſad occaſions to undo him.

Rutl. What human heart can unafflicted bear
Such manly merit in diſtreſs; ſuch worth
Betray'd; ſuch valour in the toils, beſet
By cruel foes, and faction's ſavage cry?
My good, my gracious miſtreſs, ſtretch betimes
Your ſaving arm, and ſnatch him from deſtruction;
From deadly malice, treachery, and Ceeil!
O let him live to clear his conduct up!
My gracious Queen, he'll nobly earn your bounty,
And with his deareſt blood deſerve your mercy.

Queen. Her words betray a ſtrange, unuſual fervour!
More friendſhip never could inſpire this tranſport. [*Aſide*
I never doubted that the earl was brave;
His life and valiant actions all declare it?
I think him honeſt too, but raſh and headſtrong.
I gladly would preſerve him from his foes!
And therefore, am reſolv'd, once more to ſee him.]

Rut. Oh, 'tis a godlike thought, and heav'n itſelf
Inſpires it. Sure, ſome angel moves your heart,
Your royal heart, to pity and forgiveneſs.
This gracious deed ſhall ſhine in future ſtory,
And deck your annals with the brighteſt virtue;
Poſterity ſhall praiſe the princely act,
And ages, yet to come, record your goodneſs.
Queen. I'll hear no more.-----Muſt I then learn from you,
To know my province, and be taught to move,
As each deſigning mind directs ---- Leave me.
Rutl. Her frowns are dreadful, and her eyes looks terror,
I tremble for my Eſſex! ſave him, heaven! [*Exit.*
Queen. Her warmth has touch'd me home. My jealous fear,
My fearful and ſuſpicious ſoul's alarm'd.

Enter Burleigh, Raleigh, *and others.*

Burl. The earl of Eſſex waits your royal will.
Queen. Let him approach.------And, now, once more, ſupport
Thy dignity, my ſoul; nor yield thy greatneſs
To ſtrong uſurping paſſion.-----But he comes.

Enter Eſſex, Southampton, *Guards.*

Eſſ. Permitted thus to bend, with proſtrate heart, [*kneels.*
Before your ſacred majeſty, I come
With every grateful ſenſe of royal favour,
Deeply engrav'd within my conſcious ſoul.
Queen. I ſent my orders for your ſtaff of office.
Eſſ. Madam, my envy'd dignities and honours
I firſt from your own royal hand receiv'd;
And therefore juſtly held it far beneath me,
To yield my trophies, and exalted power,
So dearly purchas'd in the field of glory,
To hands unworthy. No, my gracious Queen,
I meant to lay them at your royal feet;
Where life itſelf a willing victim falls,
If you command.
Queen. High ſwelling words, my lord, but ill ſupply
The place of deeds, and duty's juſt demand.
In danger's onſet, and the day of trial,
Conviction ſtill on acting worth attends;
Whilſt mere profeſſions are by doubts encumber'd.
Eſſ. My deeds have oft declar'd, in danger's front,
How far my duty and my valour lead me.
Allegiance ſtill my thirſt of glory fir'd,

And all my bravely gather'd envy'd laurels,
Were purchas'd only to adorn my Queen.
Queen. Yet fact o'er falacy muſt ſtill prevail,
And eloquence to ſimple truth give way.
When with my mortal foes you tamely dally'd,
By hardy rebels brav'd, you poorly fought
A ſervile pauſe, and begg'd a ſhameful truce.
Should Eſſex thus, ſo meanly compromiſe,
And loſe the harveſt of a plenteous glory,
In idle treaties, and ſuſpicious parely?
Eſſ. O deadly ſtroke! My life's the deſtin'd mark.
The poiſon'd ſhaft has drank my ſpirits deep.
Is't come to this? conſpire with rebels! hah!
I've ſerv'd you, madam, with the utmoſt peril,
And ever glory'd in th' illuſtrious danger;
Where famine fac'd me with her meagre mein,
And peſtilence and death brought up her train.
I've fought your battles in deſpite of nature,
Where ſeaſons ſicken'd, and the clime was fate.
My pow'r, to parly, or to fight, I had
From you; the time and circumſtance did call
Aloud for mutual treaty and conditions;
For that I ſtand a guarded felon here.---A traitor,
Hem'd in by villains, and by ſlaves ſurrounded.
Queen. Shall added inſolence, with creſt audacious,
Her front uplift againſt the face of pow'r?
Think not that injur'd majeſty will bear
Such arrogance uncheck'd, or unchaſtis'd,
No public truſt becomes the man who treads
With ſcornful ſteps in honour's ſacred path,
And ſtands at bold defiance with his duty.
Eſſ. Away with dignities and hated truſt,
With flattering honours, and deceitful pow'r!
Invert th' eternal rules of right and juſtice;
Let villains thrive, and out caſt virtue periſh!
Let ſlaves be rais'd, and coward's have command!
Take, take, your gaudy trifles back, thoſe baits,
Of vice, and virtue's bane.---'Tis clear, my Queen,
My royal miſtreſs caſts me off; nay, joins
With Cecil to deſtroy my life, and fame.
Queen. Preſuming wretch! audacious traytor!
Eſſ. Traytor!
Queen. Hence from my ſight, ungrateful ſlave, and learn
At diſtance to revere your Queen.
Eſſ. Yes; let
Me fly beyond the limits of the world,
And nature's verge, from proud oppreſſion far,
From malice, tyranny, from courts, from you.

Queen. Traytor! villain! [*Strikes him.*

Eſſ. Confuſion! what, a blow!
Reſtrain, good heav'n, down, down, thou rebel paſſion,
And judgment take the reins. Madam, 'tis well----
Your ſoldier falls degraded.
His glory's tarniſh'd, and his fame undone.
O bounteous recompence from royal hands!
Put you, ye implements, beware, beware,
What honour wrong'd, and honeſt wrath can act.

Queen. What would th' imperious traytor do! My life
Beyond thy wretched purpoſe ſtands ſecure.
Go, learn, at leiſure, what your deeds deſerve,
And tremble at the vengeance you provoke.

Exeunt Queen, Burleigh, Raleigh, *&c.*
manent Southampton *and* Eſſex.

Eſſ. Diſgrac'd, and ſtruck: damnation! death were glorious;
Revenge! Revenge!

South. Alas, my friend, what would
Thy rage attempt? conſider well the great
Advantage now your raſh, ungovern'd temper
Affords your foes. The Queen, incens'd, will let
Their fury looſe.---I dread the dire event.

Eſſ. Has honeſt pride no juſt reſentment left!
Nor injur'd honour feeling? Not revenge!
High heav'n ſhall hear, and earth regret my wrongs.
Hot indignation burns within my ſoul!
I'll do ſome dreadful thing, (I know not what!
Some deed as horrid as the ſhame I feel)
Shall ſtartle nature, and alarm the world!
Then hence, like lightning, let me furious fly
To hurl deſtruction at my foes on high;
Pull proud oppreſſion from its tyrant ſeat,
Redeem my glory, or embrace my fate. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

Enter Queen *and* Nottingham.

Queen. Curſed on

NOT taken yet!

Not. No, madam, for the earl
Of Eſſex, leagu'd with deſp'rate friends, made ſtrong
And obſtinate reſiſtance; till, at length,
O'erpower'd by numbers and encreaſing force,
He fled for ſhelter to a ſmall retreat,

A ſummer-houſe upon the Thames; reſolv'd
To periſh, rather than ſubmit to pow'r.
Queen. O wretch detected! O unheard of treaſon!
Conſpire againſt my life! within my view!
My reach! ſo near my very palace gates!
Pernicious monſter? What can prudence do,
Or human wiſdom more, than judge from outſide,
And ſhar'ring likeneſs? Kings can ſee no farther.
High heav'n alone can read the heart, in all
Its inmoſt frauds, and myſtic characters.
O! where ſhall majeſty beſtow its favours,
Since Eſſex is a traytor: Falſe to me!
To me, whoſe arm rais'd him to pow'r and greatneſs;
Whoſe heart ſtill fondly ſhar'd in all his triumphs,
And feels ev'n now his trait'rous deeds with pity?
But hence with pity, and the woman's pangs!
Reſentment governs, and the Queen ſhall puniſh.

Enter Burleigh.

Burl. Illuſtrious Queen, the traitors all are ſeiz'd,
Th' intelligence was true. Their black debates
Were held at Drury houſe. The dire reſult
Was this; that Eſſex ſhou'd alarm the citizens
To open mutiny, and bold rebellion;
On this pernicious errand went the earl,
Join'd by his deſp'rate and ſeditious friends.
Their purpoſe was to ſeize your royal palace,
And ſacred perſon; but your faithful people,
As by one mind inform'd, one zeal inſpir'd,
Roſe up, at once, and with their virtue quell'd them.
Queen. Thanks to their honeſt, to their loyal hearts!
But ſay, were any perſons elſe concern'd
Of high diſtinction, or of noted rank?
Burl. Yes, madam, many more, ſeduc'd of late:
'Mongſt whom the bold Southampton, foremoſt ſtands,
Precipitate and raſh; whoſe pow'r, tho' great,
Lags far behind his will to do you hurt.
They're now our priſ'ners, and are ſafe ſecur'd:
But Eſſex with Southampton, and the reſt
Of greater note, I would not dare diſpoſe of,
Without your royal mandate; and they now
Attend without, to know your final pleaſure.
Queen. Is this the juſt return of all my care?
My anxious toilſome days, and watchful nights?
Have I ſent forth a prayer---a tranſient wiſh,
But for the gen'ral good? Or, have I life,
Or length of days deſir'd, but for their ſake?
The public good is all my private care.

Have I not ever thought the meaneſt ſubject,
Oppreſt by pow'r, was, in his juſt complaint,
Above a king? What Britiſh boſom has
By foreign tyranny been griev'd, whoſe wrongs
I have not felt as mine, as mine redreſs'd?
Or have I juſtly made a ſingle man
My foe? Then could I think this grateful iſle
Contain'd one traitor's heart? But, leaſt of all,
That Eſſex' breaſt ſhould lodge it? Call the monſter,
And let me meet this rebel face to face.
Do you withdraw, and wait within our call.
[*Exit* Burl. &c.

Enter Eſſex.

You ſee we dare abide your dang'rous preſence,
Tho' treaſon ſits within your heart enthron'd,
And on that brow rebellion low'rs, where once
Such boaſted loyalty was ſaid to flouriſh,
How low the traitor can degrade the ſoldier?
Guilt g'ares in conſcious dyes upon thy cheek,
And inward horror trembles in thine eye.
How mean is fraud! how baſe ingratitude!

Eſſ. Forbear reproach, thou injur'd majeſty!
Nor wound, with piercing words, a heart already
With anguiſh torn, and bleeding with remorſe.
Your awful looks, alone, are arm'd with death,
And juſtice gives them terror.

Queen. Hapleſs man!
What cauſe could prompt, what fiend could urge thee on
To this deteſted deed? Could I from thee
Expect to meet this baſe return? from thee
To whom I ought to fly, with all the confidence
That giving bounty ever could inſpire,
Or ſeeming gratitude and worth could promiſe?

Eſſ. Alas, I own my crimes, and feel my treaſons;
They preſs me down beneath the reach of pity.
Deſpair, alone, can ſhield me from myſelf.
Oh, let the little ſpace I live be curs'd
With countleſs woes; let death unpitied come;
My name be mention'd with the utmoſt ſcorn!
If all my life can feel, or fame can ſuffer,
May ſerve to mitigate my Queen's diſpleaſure.

Queen. My pride forbids me to reproach thee more.
My pity rather would relieve thy ſorrow.
I ſee conviction, and ſevere remorſe,
Within thy mind at work. But much I fear,
That death alone can calm the raging conflict.
The people's clamours, and my ſpecial ſafety,

Call loud for juſtice, and demand your life,
But, if forgiveneſs from an injur'd Queen
Can make the few ſhort hours you live more eaſy,
I give it freely from my pitying heart;
And wiſh my willing pow'r could grant thee more.
Eſſ. O ſounds angelic! goodneſs undeſerv'd!
My ſwelling heart can keep no bounds, my ſoul
Flows o'er. And will my gracious Queen forgive me?
Oh, let me proſtrate thus before you fall,
My better angel, and my guardian genius!
Permit me, royal miſtreſs, to pronounce
My faithful ſentiments, my ſoul's true dictates;
Vouchſafe your Eſſex but this one requeſt,
This only boon, he'll thank you with his laſt,
His dying breath, and bleſs you in his paſſage.
Queen. Riſe, my lord.
If aught you have to offer can allay
Your woes, and reconcile you to your fate,
Proceed;---- and I with patient ear will liſten.
Eſſ. My real errors, and my ſeeming crimes,
Would weary mercy, and make goodneſs poor:
And yet the ſource of all my greateſt faults
Was loyalty miſled, and duty in extreme.
So jealous was my ſanguine heart, ſo warm
Affection's zeal, I could not bear the leaſt
Suſpicion of my duty to my queen.
This drove me from my high command in Ireland,
This too impell'd me to that rude behaviour,
Which juſtly urg'd the ſhameful blow I felt.
And this (O fatal raſhneſs!) made me think
My Queen had giv'n her Eſſex up, a victim
To ſtateſmen's ſchemes, and wicked policy.
Stung by that piercing thought, my madneſs flew
Beyond all bounds, and now, alas! has brought me
To this moſt ſhameful fall; and, what's ſtill worſe,
My own reproaches, and my Queen's diſpleaſure.
Queen. Unhappy man! my yielding ſoul is touch'd,
And pity pleads thy cauſe within my breaſt.
Eſſ. Say but, my gracious ſov'reign, ere I go
For ever from your preſence, that you think me
Guiltleſs of all attempts againſt your throne,
And ſacred life. Your faithful Eſſex ne'er
Could harbour in his breaſt ſo foul a thought.
Believe it not, my Queen. By heav'n, I ſwear,
When to the higheſt pitch of glory rais'd,
The ſplendid noon of fortune's brighteſt ſunſhine,
Nor ages of renown could yield me half
The joy, nor make my life ſo greatly bleſt,

As saving yours, tho' for a single hour.
Queen. My lord, I think you honest: Nay, I own,
Whatever coldness I put on was meant
To save you from the malice of your foes.
I judg'd your crimes, what you yourself pronounc'd 'em,
The rash effect of an intemp'rate zeal.
Ess. Was ever wretch, like Essex, thus undone
By goodness in excess, and lavish'd grace!
Oh, I could tear my erring heart with these.
Revenging hands!---What blessings have I lost!
What clemency abus'd!---Now could I wish
For lengthen'd life---indeed, for endless years.
A whole eternity's too short, to shew
My pious sorrows, and atone my folly.
Queen. Too well the passage to my heart he finds;
~~And pity's hands let in the dang'rous guest.~~
How weak is reason, when oppos'd to nature! [*Aside.*
My lord, I would convince you that I still
Regard your life, and labour to preserve it;
But cannot screen you from a public trial.
With prudence make your best defence; but should
Severity her iron jurisdiction
Extend too far, and give thee up condemn'd
To angry laws, thy Queen will not forget thee.
Yet, lest you then shou'd want a faithful friend,
(For friends will fly you in the time of need)
Here, from my finger take this ring; a pledge
Of mercy; having this, you ne'er shall need
An advocate with me; for whensoe'er
You give, or send it back, by heav'n, I swear,
As I do hope for mercy on my soul,
That I will grant whatever boon you ask.
Ess. O grace surprizing! most amazing goodness!
Words cannot paint the transport of my soul.
Let me receive it on my grateful knees,
At once to thank and bless the hand that gives it.
Queen Depend, my lord, on this; 'twixt you and me
This ring shall be a private mark of faith [*Gives the ring.*
Inviolate. Be confident, chear up,
Dispel each melancholy fear, and trust
Your sovereign's promise; she will ne'er forsake you.
Ess. Let providence dispose my lot as 'twill,
May watchful angels ever guard my Queen;
May healing wisdom in her counsels reign,
And firm fidelity surround her throne;
May victory her dreaded banners bear,
And joyful conquests crown her soldier's brow;
Let every bliss be mingled in her cup,

And heav'n, at last, become her great reward. [*Exit.*

Queen. Who waits there;

Enter Burleigh *and* Officers.

Guard your Pris'ner safe. 'Tis done;
And yet foreboding tremors shake my heart.
Something sits heavy here, and presses down
My spirit's with its weight. What can it mean?
Suppose he be condemn'd, my royal word
Is plighted for his life; his enemies,
No doubt, will censure much.---No matter,---let 'em.
I know him honest, and despise their malice.
Unhappy state, where mercy and compassion
Too often meet with clamour and reproach;
But princes must endure, for public good,
The narrow censures of misguiding crowds.

Enter Countess of Rutland.

Rutl. Where is the Queen? I'll fall before her feet
Prostrate, implore, besiege her royal heart,
And force her to forgive.

Queen. What means this frenzy?

Rutl. O gracious Queen, if ever pity touch'd
Your gen'rous breast, let not the cruel axe
Destroy his precious life; preserve my Essex,
Preserve from shameful death, the noble, loyal,
O, save the brave,---the best of subjects.---Save
My life! my hope! my joy! my all! my husband!

Queen Husband! what sudden deadly blow is this!
Hold up, my soul, nor sink beneath this wound.
You beg a traitor's life!

Rutl. O gracious Queen!
He ever lov'd,---was ever faithful, brave.---
If nature dwells about your heart, O spurn
Me not; my lord! my love! my husband bleeds!

Queen. Take her away.

Rutl. I cannot let you go.
Hold off your hands.---Here on this spot I'll fix.
Here lose all sense; still let me stretch these arms,
Inexorable Queen, he yet may live.
O give him to my poor afflicted heart!
One pitying look, to save me from distraction!

Queen I'll hear no more. I'm tortur'd---take her hence.

Rutl. Nay, force me not away.---Inhuman wretches!
O mercy! mercy!---Then to thee, good heav'n,
(My Queen, my cruel Queen, denies to hear me)
To thee I call, to thee for mercy bend.
Melt down her bosom's frozen sense to feel

Some portion of my deadly grief, my fell
Diſtraction. Turn, O turn, and ſee a wife,
A tortur'd wife.---
Queen. Why am not I obey'd?
Rutl. Nay, do not thus
Abandon me to fell deſpair. Juſt heaven,
That ſees my ſorrows, will avenge the wrong,
This cruel wrong, this barb'rous tyranny. [*Forced off.*
Queen. Wedded to Rutland! moſt unhappy pair!
And oh, ill-fated Queen! never till now
Did ſorrow ſettle in thy heart its throne.
Now black deſpair its cloudy curtain draws
Around the ſetting peace, where joy, alas,
Recal my pledge of ſafety from his hands,
And give him up to death!---But life or death
To me is equal now. Diſtraction dwells
Within my tortur'd ſoul, and furies rend it.
Unhappy ſtate, where peace ſhall never come!
One fatal moment has confirm'd my doom,
Turn'd all my comfort to inteſtine ſtrife,
And fill'd with mortal pangs my future life. [*Exit.*

Enter Raleigh, *and Lieutenant of the Tower.*

Raleigh.

THEIR peers, with much indulgence, heard their plea,
And gave them ample ſcope for their defence;
But naught avail'd, their crimes were too notorious.
They bore their ſentence with becoming ſpirit;
And here's the royal mandate for their death. ----
The lady Nottingham! what brings her hither!

Enter Nottingham.

Not. Lieutenant, lead me to the earl of Eſſex,
I bring a meſſage to him from the Queen.
Lieut. He's with his friend, the brave Southampton, madam,
Preparing now for their expected fate:
But I'll acquaint his lordſhip with your pleaſure. [*Exit.*
Ral. What means this meſſage? does the Queen relent?
Not. I fear ſhe does: for ſuch a war of paſſions,
Such varying tumults never ſtrove within
Her breaſt till now. Sometimes ſhe rails at Eſſex,

And calls him villain, traytor, dooms him dead;
Yet in a moment turns again to pity.
At length, she sent me to th' ungrateful earl,
To learn if he could offer aught that might
Induce her royal mercy to forgiveness.
Go you to court, for Cecil there expects you.
I've promis'd to acquaint him with what passes
'Twixt me and Essex ere I see the Queen.
Ral. Madam, I go. [*Exit.*
Not. Now vengeance steel my heart!
Offended woman, whilst her pride remains,
To malice only, and revenge will bow;
And ev'ry virtue at that altar sacrifice.
But see he comes, with manly sorrow clad.
There was a time, that presence could subdue
My pride, and melt my heart to gentle pity.
I then could find no joy but in his smiles;
And thought him lovely as the summer's bloom;
But all his beauties now are hateful to me.

Enter Essex.

Ess. Whether you bring me death or life, I know not.
But if strict friendship and remembrance past,
May aught presage to my afflicted heart,
Sure mercy only from those lips should flow,
And grace be utter'd by that friendly tongue.
Not. My lord, I'm glad you think me still your friend.
I come not to upbraid but serve you now;
And pleas'd I am, to be the messenger
Of such glad tidings in the day of trouble,
As now I bring you. When the Queen had heard
That by the lords you were condemn'd to die,
She sent me, in her mercy here to know,
If you had aught to offer, that might move
Her royal clemency to spare your life.
Ess. Could any circumstance new lustre add
To my dread sov'reign's goodness, 'tis the making
The kind the gen'rous Nottingham, its messenger.
O madam, could my glowing heart express
Its grateful sentiments, 'twould speak such language
As angels utter, when they praise their maker.
Not. 'Tis well, my lord; but there's no time to spare,
The Queen impatient, waits for my return.
Ess. My heart was wishing for some faithful friend,
And bounteous heav'n hath sent thee to my hopes,
Know then, kind Nottingham (for now I'll trust
Thee with the dearest secret of my life)
'Tis not, long since, the Queen (who well foresaw

To what the malice of my foes would drive me)
Gave me this ring, the sacred pledge of mercy;
And, with it, made a solemn vow to heaven,
That, whensoever I should give or send
It back again, she'd freely grant whate'er
Request I then shou'd make.

Not. Give, give it me,
My lord, and let me fly on friendship's wings,
To bear it to the Queen, and to it add
My pray'rs and influence to preserve thy life.

Ess. O take it then,---it is the pledge of life,
The precious spring that drives my vital stream
Around, and keeps my heart still warm; it is
The door of breath, the hope of joy, the shield
Of friendship.---O, it is my dear Southampton's
Last, last remaining slay his thread of being!
Which more than worlds I prize.-- O, take it then,
Take it, thou guardian angel of my life!
And offer up the incense of thy pray'r!
O beg, intreat, implore her majesty,
From public shame, and ignominious death,
And from th' obdurate axe, to save my friend.

Not. My lord, with all the pow'rs that nature gave,
And friendship can inspire, I'll urge the Queen
To grant you your request.

Ess. Kind Nottingham,
Your pious offices shall ever be
My fervent theme; and if my doubtful span
Relenting heav'n should stretch to years remote,
Each passing hour shall still remind my thoughts,
And tell me that I owe my all to thee.
My friend shall thank you too for lengthen'd life:
And now I'll fly with comfort to his arms,
To let him know the mercy that you bring. [*Exit.*

Not. Yes, you shall feel my friendship's weight fall heavy
Upon your guilty soul, ungrateful man!
Your false, disdainful heart shall pay the fine
Of love neglected, and of beauty scorn'd

SCENE, *the Court.*

Enter Queen, ~~Burleigh.~~

Queen. Ha! is not Nottingham return'd?

~~*Burl.* Not, madam.~~

Queen. Dispatch a speedy messenger to haste her.
My agitated heart can find no rest,
So near the brink of fate--unhappy man!

Its date is but th' immediate breath we draw;
Nor have we surety for a second gale.
Ten thousand accidents in ambush lie
For the embody'd dream.
A frail and fickle tenement it is;
Which like the brittle glass that measures time,
Is often broke, ere half its sands are run.
Ess. Such cold philosophy the heart disdains;
And friendship shudders at the mortal tale.
My friend, the fearful precipice is past,
And danger dares not meet us more. Fly swift,
Ye better angels, waft the welcome tidings
Of pardon to my friend; of life and joy.

Enter Lieutenant.

Lieut. I grieve to be the messenger of woe.
But must, my Lords, intreat you to prepare
For instant death. Here is the royal mandate
That orders your immediate execution.
Ess. Immediate execution!---What, so sudden!
No message from the Queen? or Nottingham?
Lieut. None, sir.
Ess. Deluded hopes! O worse than death!
Perfidious Queen, to make a mock of life!
My friend, my friend destroy'd! O piercing thought!
O direful chance!---In my destruction ruin'd!
In my sad fall undone! Why could not mine,
My life atone for both; my blood appease?
Can you, my friend, forgive me?
South. Yes, O yes,
My bosom's better half, I can. With thee
I'll gladly seek the coast unknown, and leave
The lab'ring mark of irksome life behind.
With thee, my friend, 'tis joy to die! 'tis glory!
For who would wait the tardy stroke of time,
Or cling like reptiles to the verge of being,
When we can bravely leap from life at once,
And spring triumphant in a friend's embrace?

Enter Raleigh.

Ral. To you, my lord Southampton, from the Queen
A pardon comes: your life her mercy spares.
Ess. For ever blest be that indulgent pow'r,
Which saves my friend. This weight ta'en off, my soul
Shall upwards spring, and mingle with the blest.
South. All-ruling heav'ns, can this, can this be just?
Support me, hold, ye straining heart-strings, hold,
And keep my sinking frame from dissolution.

O 'tis too much for mortal ſtrength to bear,
Or thought to ſuffer? No, I'll die with thee.
They ſhall not part us, Eſſex.
Eſſ. Live, O live,
Thou nobleſt, braveſt, beſt of men and friends!
Whilſt life is worth thy wiſh, till time and thou
Agree to part, and nature ſend thee to me;
Thou gen'rous ſoul, farewel;---live and be happy;
And, oh, may life make largely up to thee
Whatever bleſſings fate has thus cut off
From thy departing friend.
Lieut. My lord, my warrant
Strictly forbids to grant a moment's time.
South. Oh, muſt we part for ever!----Cruel fortune!
Wilt thou then tear him hence?---Severe divorce!
Let me cling round thy ſacred perſon ſtill,
Still claſp thee to my boſom cloſe, and keep
Stern fate at diſtance.
Eſſ. O my friend, we'll meet
Again where virtue finds a juſt reward,
Where factious malice never more can reach us.
Recal thy reaſon, be thyſelf once more.
I fear it not.---This hideous monſter, death,
When ſeen at diſtance, ſhocks weak nature's eye;
But reaſon, as it draws more near, defies it.
I thank thy ſorrows, but cou'd ſpare 'em now.
I need not bid thee guard my fame from wrongs:
And, oh! a dearer treaſure to thy care
I truſt than either life or fame---my wife.
Her bitter ſorrows pierce my ſoul; for her
My heart drops blood!---Oh, ſhe will want a friend.
Then take her to thy care; do thou pour balm
On her deep wounded ſpirit, and let her find
My tender helps in thee,---I muſt be gone,
My ever faithful, and my gallant friend.---
I prithee leave this woman's work.---Farewel.---
Take this laſt dear embrace.---Farewel, for ever!
South. My burſting breaſt!---I fain would ſpeak but words
Are poor.---Farewel!----
But we ſhall meet again, embrace in one
Eternal band, which never ſhall be looſ'd. [*Exit.*
Eſſ. To death's concluding ſtroke, lead on, lieutenant,
My wife! Now reaſon, fortitude, ſupport me;
For now, indeed, comes on my foreſt trial.

Enter Counteſs of Rutland.

O thou 'art, dear reſerve of fortune's malice;

For fate can add no more!---Oh, com'ſt thou then
In this dread hour, when all my ſtraining thoughts
Are ſtruggling in the tend'reſt ties of nature;
Oh, com'ſt thou now t' arreſt my parting ſoul,
And force it back to life!

Rutl. Thou ſole delight,
Thou only joy which life cou'd ever give,
Or death deprive me of, my wedded lord!
I come, with thee determin'd to endure
The utmoſt rigour of our angry ſtars,
To join thee, fearleſs, in the graſp of death,
And ſeek ſome dwelling in a world beyond it.

Eſſ. To much, thou partner of this diſmal hour,
Thy gen'rous ſoul would prompt thee to endure;
Nor can thy tender, trembling heart ſuſtain it.
Long years of bliſs remain in ſtore for thee,
And ſmiling time his treaſures ſhall unfold
To bribe thy ſtay.

Rutl. Thou cruel comforter!
Alas! what's life! what's hated life to me?
Can aught beneath this ſtarry hemiſphere,
Which earth's extent, and nature's wealth can yield,
Which proud ambition ſtretches to enjoy,
Or paſſion pants for, recompenſe thy loſs?
Alas, this univerſe, this goodly frame,
Shall all as one continued curſe appear,
And every object blaſt, when thou art gone.

Eſſ. O ſtrain not thus the little ſtrength I've left,
The weak ſupport that holds up life, to bear
A few ſhort moments more, its weight of woe,
Its loſs of thee. O turn away thoſe eyes.
Nor with that look melt down my fixt reſolve:
And yet a little longer let me gaze
On that lov'd form. Alas, I feel my ſight
Grow dim, and reaſon from her throne retire;
For pity's ſake let go my breaking heart,
And leave me to my fate.

Rutl. Why wilt thou ſtill
Of parting talk; ſince life its thouſand gates
Unbars, to let us through together. Death
Is but a ſtep that reaches to eternity.
O that the friendly hand of Heav'n would ſnatch
Us both, at once, above the diſtant ſtars!
Where fortune's venom'd ſhafts can never pierce,
Nor cruel Queens deſtroy!---Nay, look not ſo.

Eſſ. The awful ſearcher, whoſe impartial eye
Explores the ſecrets of each human heart,
And ev'ry thought ſurveys, can witneſs for me,

How close thy image clings around my soul;
Retards each rising wish, and draws me back
To life, entangl'd by thy lov'd idea.
When full necessity those ties shall break,
For quickly break they must---when I from earth,
On faith's white angel wings, to heav'n shall soar,
Thy lasting form shall still my mind possess,
Where bliss supreme each faculty o'erwhelms,
And raptur'd angels glow. -----

Lieut. My lord, the time
Too far is stretch'd, it now grows late.

Ess. Lead on.

Rutl. Stay, stay, my love, my dearest, dying lord!
Ah, whither wouldst thou go? Ah, do not leave me!
Alas, I'll hasten to attend your flight;
And nature gives consent we should not part.
I feel each faculty for fate prepare,
And my quick soul wou'd fain set out before you.
O precious pangs!---O dear distress!---still closer
To thy quick throbbing heart let mine complain,
And on thy lab'ring bosom breathe my last. [*Faints.*

Ess. Thou sinking excellence! thou matchless woman!
Shall fortune rob me of thy dear embrace,
Or earth's whole power, or death divide us now!
Stay, stay, thou spotless, injur'd saint, and take---

Lieut. My Lord, already you have been indulg'd
Beyond what I can warrant by my orders.

Ess. Oh, let me on her dying bosom fall,
Embrace her spotless form ---One moment more
Afford me to my sorrows.---Oh! look there.---
Cou'd bitter anguish pierce your heart, like mine,
You'd pity now the bitter pangs I feel,
The throbs that tear my vital strings away,
And rend my agonizing soul.---

Lieut. My lord.

Ess. But one short moment more, and I attend.
Ye sacred ministers, that virtue guard,
And shield the righteous in the paths of peril,
Restore her back to life, and lengthen'd years
Of joy; dry up her bleeding sorrows all: . . . . . .
O cancel from her thoughts this dismal hour,
And blot my image from her sad remembrance
'Tis done.---
And now, ye trembling cords of life give way:
Nature and time let go your hold; eternity
Demands me, *Exeunt* Essex, Lieutenant.

~~Woman. She returns to life, fool help!~~

Rutl. Where has my lost, benighted soul been wandring?

What means this mist that hangs about my mind?
Thro' which reflection's painful eye discerns
Imperfect forms, and horrid shapes of woe.
The cloud dispels, the shades withdraw, and all
My dreadful fate appears---O where's my lord?
My life! my Essex! O whither have they ta'en him?

Enter Queen *and Attendants.*

Queen. To execution! fly with lightning's winds,
And save him. Hah! by whose command was this?
Stop, stop the fatal blow.---My fears were true.
[*Exit one of the attendants.*

Rutl. Thou saving angel sent from heav'n? my Queen,
My gracious Queen, be quick!----the bloody Burleigh!
A moment may destroy him. Stretch thy arm.
Defend, defend, O snatch him from the blow!
Preserve my husband! O Elizabeth,
Look down upon me. Angels move her heart
To pity! save him, save him, gracious Queen!

Queen. Be calm, he shall not die. Rise up. I came
To save his life.

Rutl. 'Tis mercy's voice that speaks.
My Essex shall again be mine. My Queen,
My bounteous, gracious Queen has said the word.
May troops of angels guard thy sacred life,
And, in thy latest moments, waft thy soul
To meet that mercy, in the realms of joy,
Which now thy royal goodness grants to me.

Enter Burleigh.

Burl. Madam, your orders came, alas! too late
Ere they they arriv'd, the axe had fall'n on Essex.

Rutl. Ha! dead! What hell is this that opens round me?
What fiend art thou that draws the horrid scene?
Hah! Burleigh! bloody murd'rer, where's my husband!
O where's my lord, my Essex?
Destruction seize, and madness rend my brain.
See, see, they bend him to the fatal block;
Now, now, the horrid axe is lifted high;
It falls, it falls, he bleeds, he bleeds, he dies!

Queen. Alas, her sorrows pierce my suff'ring heart.

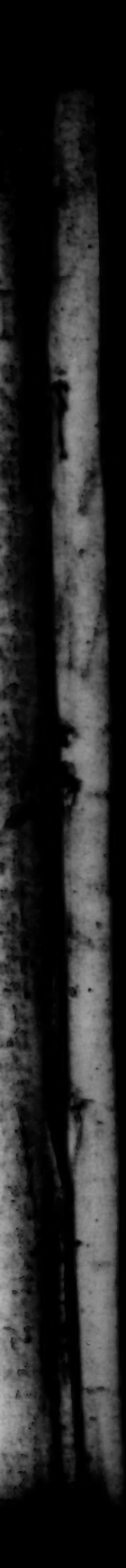
Rutl. Eternal discord tear the social world,
And nature's laws dissolve! expunge, erase
The hated marks of time's engraving hand.
And every trace destroy! Arise, despair,
Assert thy rightful claim, possess me all!
Bear, bear me to my murder'd lord, to clasp
His bleeding body in my dying arms;

And in the tomb embrace his dear remains,
And mingle with his duſt for ever. [Exit.
Queen. Hapleſs woman!
She ſhall henceforth be partner of my ſorrows,
And we'll contend who moſt ſhall weep for Eſſex.
O quick to kill, and ready to deſtroy, [*To* Burleigh.
Cou'd no pretext be found, no cauſe appear,
To lengthen mercy out a moment more,
And ſtretch the ſpan of grace? O cruel Burleigh!
This, this was thy dark work, unpitying man!
Burl. My gracious miſtreſs, blame not this my duty,
My firm obedience to your high command.
The laws condemn'd him firſt to die; nor think
I ſtood between your mercy and his life.
It was the lady Nottingham, not I.
Herſelf confeſs'd it all, in wild deſpair,
That from your majeſty, to Eſſex ſent,
With terms of proffer'd grace, ſhe then receiv'd
From his own hand a fatal ring, a pledge,
It ſeems, of much importance, which the earl,
With earneſt ſuit, and warm intreaty, begg'd her,
As ſhe would prize his life, to give your majeſty.
In this ſhe fail'd---in this ſhe murder'd Eſſex.
Queen. O barb'rous woman!
Surrounded ſtill by treachery and fraud!
What bloody deed is this? Thou injur'd Eſſex?
My fame is ſoil'd to all ſucceeding times:
But heav'n alone can view my breaking heart,
Then let its will be done.----
From hence let proud, reſiſting mortals know
The arm parental, and th' indulgent blow.
To heaven's corrective rod, ſubmiſſive, bend;
Adore its wiſdom, on its power depend;
Whilſt ruling juſtice guides eternal ſway,
Let nature tremble, and let man obey.

EPILOGUE.

By an Unknown Hand.

Spoken by Mrs CIBBER.

NEWS! News! good folks, rare news, and you shall know it------
I've got intelligence about our poet!
Who do you think he is?---you'll never guess;
An IRISH BRICKLAYER, *neither more or less.*
And now the secrets out, you cannot wonder,
That in commencing bard he made a blunder.
Has he not left the better for the worse,
In quitting solid brick for empty verse?
Can he believe the example of Old Ben,
Who chang'd (like him) the trowel for the pen,
Will in his favour move your critic bowels?
You rather wish most poet's pens were trowels.
Our man is honest, sensible, and plain,
Nor has the poet made him pert, or vain:
No beau, no courtier, nor conceited youth:
But then so rude, he always speaks the truth:
I told him, he must flatter, learn address,
And gain the heart of some rich patroness:
'Tis she, said I, your labours will reward,
If you but join the bricklayer with the bard;
As thus,---should she be old and worse for wear,
You must new-case her, front her and repair;
If crack'd in fame, as scarce to bear a touch,
You cannot use your trowel *then too much;*
In short, whate'er her morals, age or station,
Plaister *and* white-wash *in your dedication.*
Thus I advis'd---but he detests the plan:
What can be done with such a simple man?
A poet's nothing worth, and nought availing,
Unless he'll furnish, where there is a failing.
Authors in these good times are made and us'd,
To grant those favours nature has refus'd.
If he wont fib, *what bounty can he crave?*
We pay for what we want, not what we have---
Nay, tho' of every blessing we have store,
Our sex will always wish---a little more.---
If he'll not bend his heart to this his duty,
And sell (to who will buy) wit, honour, beauty;
The bricklay'r still, for him the proper trade is,
To rough to deal with gentleman and ladies.---
In short- they'll all avoid him and neglect him,
Unless that you, his patrons, *will protect him.*

FINIS.